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Identity Crisis in Syed Amanuddin's "Dont Call Me Indo- Anglian"

Indian Writing in English is an independent discipline in the world. It is no longer been a hothouse plant but a distinct branch of English Literature. It is the outcome of many factors, like the British rule, the English Language as an official language in India, Westernized education system in India, study of Western thoughts, the impact of Western culture and the immigration. Indian English Writers use the English language in unique ways to express the Indian sensibility. The works of many distinguished Indian English Writers ascertain that English has been for them as natural as their own mother tongue. Nirad C. Chaudhri's identity –structure seems shaped by the 'catalytic power' of the English language and literature as seen in The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian. The poem, "An Introduction" illustrates the fact that the language Kamala Das uses becomes her own:

... The language I speak

Becomes mine

Its distortions, its queerness

All mine, mine alone

It is half English, half- Indian

Funny perhaps, but it is honest (11-16)

In the hands of these Indo Anglian Writers English seems to take on the hues and colours, the shades and nuances, the flavour and fragrance of the Indian situation in an imperceptible way. Syed Amanuddin is an Indo- Anglian poet, artist, painter, photographer, philosopher and English Professor. His works capture the essence of the human experience joy, happiness, love, pain, suffering and death. His works express and emphasize the search for universal truths and help the readers to see the injustice, irony and beauty of the world around us. His published several books of poetry includes *Adventures of Atman* (1977), *Gems and Germs*, (1978), and *Challenger Poems* (1988). His poetry has been received worldwide and has been translated into French, Urdu, and Kannada.

It is a matter of pity that till today Amanuddin has been deprived of justice and proper attention from men of letters. Most of literary critics have either ignored him totally or assigned subordinate position in Indo-English poetry. A. N. Dwivedi has rightly said, “Though his Poetical collections have won wide acclaim in various periodicals both in India and abroad, no critic except Brenda Prince, not even Prof. K.R.S. Iyengar, has examined them thoroughly and dispassionately” (14)

“Dont Call Me Indo- Anglian” is a poem about the fixing ground of an identity. Amanuddin is an American based Indian poet who writes in English. This poem is part of ever- on –going discussion on whether an Indian should write in English when he / she has the wealth of his / her own mother tongue available. Identity is a multidimensional word. In psychology and sociology, identity is a person’s conception and expression of their individuality or group affiliations. Identity may be defined as the distinctive characteristic belonging to any given individual, or shared by all members of a particular social category or group.

The question of identity is the most controversial issue in postcolonial time and literature and it can be regarded the most important because its crisis exists in all postcolonial communities. Due to the circumstances of post-colonial era and the problematic conditions faced by newly freed nations and countries in their search and formation of self-identity, the crisis floated on the surface. The issue of identity is not a clear and fixed concept as it may be imagined that led to the crisis and became a phenomena as Mercer argues, “identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, when something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty” (43).

Theorist Erik Erikson in his book, *Identity: Youth and Crisis* coined the term ‘identity crisis’ and believed that it was one of the most important conflicts people face in development . According to Erikson, “an identity crisis is a time of intensive analysis and exploration of different ways of looking at oneself.” The idea of identity crisis is expressed by the poet Meena Alexander in her memoir *Fault Lines*:

I am, a woman cracked by multiple migrations. Uprooted so many times. I am a poet writing in America. But American poet? ... An Asian American poet then? ... A woman poet, a woman poet of color, a South Indian woman who makes up lines in English... A Third World woman poet.... (193)

Like Meena Alexander, Ammanudin also expresses the same idea in his poem, “Dont Call Me Indo Anglian”

i hate hyphens

The artificial bridges

Between artificial values

In the name of race religion n language

i damn all hyphenated minds

Prejudiced offsprings of unenlightened souls

i denounce all labels and labelmakers

Amanuddin do not want to be in the confusion of language and culture. He is the poet born in India and moved to America. The culture, language and tradition of India are still in the mind of the Poet. The poet hate hyphens and he do not want to create the artificial bridges for artificial values. He refuses the labels and label makers. He do not want to classify himself into other.

They call me indo-anglian
I don't know what they mean
cauvery flows in my veins
chamundi hills rise in my mind with stars afloat
Eyes of the goddess smiling on the slain demon
brindavan fountains sing in my soul

They call him Indo-Anglian but the Cauvery flows in his veins, his mind is filled with Chamundi hills and Brindavan fountains. But now the poet flown across the universe. His imagination is wide.

They call me indo-anglian
It's true i write in english
Dream in the language of shakespeare n keats
But I am not an anglo my friend
i am a POET
i have lived forty centuries under various names
i am now amanuddin

The critics grouped him under Indo- Anglian. The poet felt that it is mistaken identity and it is the small group of writers. He had the knowledge of Dante, Kalidasa, Kabir and Ghalib. So he wants to call him as a POET.

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